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Network News

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Issue no. 3 November 1992

Congress Cuts Military Aid to Indonesia

On October 2, a House-Senate Conference Committee deleted $2.3 million in International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding for Indonesia from the foreign aid appropriations bill to protest human rights violations in East Timor. The bill was signed into law by President Bush on October 6.

The cutoff of the only direct US military aid for Indonesia came after a hard-fought battle, in which Indonesia enlisted members of the US military, government, and major corporations to lobby for the program, which trains about 150 military officers annually in the US. More than 2600 have come since Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975.

By resisting pressure from business interests and the Suharto and Bush administrations, Congress sent a strong message. This is the first time that Congress has cut aid to Indonesia over East Timor. When they convene in January, supporters of East Timor will try to cut off weapons sales (over $250 million in 1990), and for other sanctions included in H.R.5176, a comprehensive economic sanctions bill which suspends military and non-humanitarian economic aid until the East Timorese can decide their own political future.

In June, the House of Representatives unanimously approved an amendment proposed by Ronald Machtley (R-RI) and Tony Hall (D-OH) to defund the IMET program. They also required that each economic aid project for Indonesia be approved by Congress. The issue was decided in three days, and pro-Indonesia forces did not make a serious effort to influence the vote.

In the Senate, however, they had three months to lobby, and made this a major issue. Business representatives told Congress that Jakarta had threatened to retaliate against US firms if aid was cut, and Senators were contacted by cabinet officials and admirals. Lobbyists for General Electric, AT&T, Freeport-MacMoRan and McDonnell-Douglas went to work.

The debate garnered television coverage (ABC-TV sent reporter Charles Glass to East Timor under cover, and *World News Tonight* broadcast an excellent segment on September 21), an editorial in the *Wall Street Journal*, and widespread discussion. Senators heard from human rights, church, peace, and East Timor solidarity groups. Although the grassroots groups couldn't match Jakarta's money and high-level contacts, they mobilized many Americans who had previously been inactive on East Timor. Particular credit goes to students at Brown University, who telephoned hundreds of East Timor supporters all over the country.

On September 23, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted 15-12 to disallow IMET unless the State Department certified that conditions proposed by Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI), were met. Unfortunately, the conditions did not require anything concrete from Jakarta. The Committee voted down stronger conditions from subcommittee chair Patrick Leahy (D-VT) that required Indonesia to permit human rights observers into East Timor and to list people killed and jailed during and after a massacre there last November 12, when Indonesian troops shot into a peaceful memorial procession. Voting for Leahy's position were Senators Leahy, DeConcini, Harkin, Mikulski, Lautenberg, D'Amato, Specter, Hatfield, Fowler, Byrd, Adams and Sasser. Senators Inouye, Johnston, Rudman, Nickles, Kasten, Stevens, Cochran, Bond, R. Kerrey, Reid, Domenici, Hollings, Gramm, Garn and Gorton supported Inouye.

When the conference committee met October 2, House subcommittee chair David Obey (D-WI) fought for a total suspension of IMET, joined by Representatives Matthew McHugh (D-NY) and John Edward Porter (R-IL). Senator Leahy proposed conditions stronger than those rejected by the Senate, and was supported by Representative Mickey Edwards (R-OK), ranking Republican on the House subcommittee. When Inouye and his supporters saw that they did not have the votes, they agreed to a total cutoff, expecting that Suharto would reject conditional aid as an insult to national pride. Legislators from both parties warned of further cuts if Indonesia did not move towards human rights and self-determination for East Timor.

Although the aid cutoff was not extensively reported by the United States media, it did get worldwide attention. According to the Indonesian newsmagazine *Tempo*, the US State Department called the cut "counter-productive for America's efforts to promote an appreciation of human rights in Indonesia," claiming that IMET promotes democratic values. At least one Indonesian IMET graduate, Sayidiman Suryohadiprojo (former head of the army's National Defense Institute), disagrees: "It's nonsense to say that the US opens the officers' minds to human rights. We went there only to study military affairs, and there's no connection whatsoever with human rights."

Jakarta adamantly rejects any linkage of aid to East Timor, calling it "an internal matter." Perhaps their sensitivity to such pressure will encourage them to seek an "internationally-acceptable solution" in the UN-brokered negotiations with Portugal now underway.

Suharto Visits USA

While Congress was debating IMET, Indonesian President Suharto visited New York, where he addressed the UN General Assembly as the new chair of the Non-Aligned Movement on Thursday, September 24. ETAN/US had decided not to do a confrontational action, and we issued a press statement calling on the Indonesian and U.S. governments and the international community to implement the Non-Aligned Movement's global commitment to "the achievement of freedoms and for securing the right to self-determination" for the people of East Timor.

During Suharto's speech, Canadian Li-Lien Gibbons (whose stepbrother Kamal Bamadhaj was killed by Indonesian troops during the Santa Cruz massacre), shouted "Free East Timor" from the General Assembly gallery, where she stood with a sign carrying the same words. Although Li-Lien was promptly escorted out and banned from the UN forever, her plea was heard worldwide, as the media contrasted Suharto's call for an end to "policies of hegemony and domination" with his conduct in East Timor.

On the day of Suharto's address, *The New York Times* ran $180,000 of pro-Indonesia advertisements (four full-page and two half-page ads, including the back page of every section), paid for by oil, mining, and banking companies. On the following day they editorialized about *The Cemetery Called East Timor*, calling the 1975 invasion "just heinous as the more recent and more highly publicized territorial grabs by Iraq and Serbia. And the evil continues."

Friday evening, the American business community hosted a dinner for Suharto at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. About 30 ETAN members picketed outside in the rain for four hours, distributing a flyer which called on General Suharto to hear the words against "aggression and foreign occupation" which he had spoken the day before. We had cordial discussions with several businessmen.

Negotiations Begin

The next day, the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal met in New York under the guidance of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. They agreed to meet again in mid-December to continue negotiations leading toward an "internationally-acceptable solution to the question of East Timor." Although the East Timorese have not been invited to the talks thus far, many are encouraging the participants to include East Timorese representatives as a step toward true self-determination.

Next ETAN meeting

The next meeting of the East Timor Action Network/US will be on Sunday, November 8, at 2:00 pm at the home of Max Surjadinata, .100 LaSalle Street (apt 21B), east of Broadway near 123 Street, Manhattan, (212)222-1899. We will have several special guests, including East Timorese José Luis Guterres and Nelson Santos, who are in New York to meet with UN delegations. In addition, Australian journalist James Dunn, author of *Timor: A People Betrayed,* may join us.

We'll be evaluating recent events and putting the final touches on plans to commemorate the anniversary of the November 12 massacre.

November 12 Commemorations

Thursday November 12 is one year after Indonesian troops shot and killed over 140 people in cold blood at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili. Recent reports put the death toll at 273 or higher. In New York, we will remember the 200,000 East Timorese victims, including the Santa Cruz casualties, at an interfaith memorial service that day from 2:00 to 4:00 pm at the UN Church Center, 777 UN Plaza (First Avenue and 44th Street). This service is organized by the International Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for East Timor, and is one of many events taking place worldwide. In the US, there will also be events in San Francisco (call 408-946-4899 for details) and other cities.

Upcoming Radio Documentary

Pacifica radio journalist Amy Goodman has produced a half-hour radio documentary *Massacre: The Story Of East Timor* which will be distributed nationally by satellite for airing on November 12.

The documentary includes eyewitness accounts of the Santa Cruz massacre by Amy Goodman and *New Yorker* correspondent Allan Nairn, as well as the dramatic tape of the massacre, which was smuggled out of the country several days after the killings. The piece uses archival material to document the US role in the 1975 invasion of East Timor and the subsequent mass killings which have claimed the lives of one-third of the Timorese. Woven throughout the piece will be interviews from inside the small half-island, now once again closed to foreign journalists.

Ask your local public radio station program director to air the piece, which will run twice on the satellite: November 9, 1300-1329, channel 12 (program ID #92-000-01120) and November 11, 1700-1729, channel 11 following Pacifica National News. If they need more information, they can refer to the DACS. If they don't have a downlink, call the Pacifica Archives at 1-800-735-0230 for a tape.

On Pacifica, Amy Goodman's November 12 radio documentary will air in New York (WBAI) at 8:00 am and 6:30 pm, in Berkeley (KPFA) at 5:00 pm, and in Los Angeles (KPFK) on Wednesday, November 11 at 9:00 am.

Video available

At the end of October, ETAN's half-hour TV program *Aggression and Self-Determination: Massacre in East Timor* was distributed by Deep Dish TV. VHS copies are available from ETAN/US for $20 plus $3 shipping. The program describes the history of East Timor, the massacre, and follow-up responses, with particular focus on United States government involvement. It includes footage of the massacre, UN and Congressional hearings, and teach-ins, and is an excellent way to activate Americans on the issue.

Araujo Receives Human Rights Award

Fernando de Araujo, an East Timorese student sentenced to nine years in Indonesian prison for organizing a November 19, 1991 peaceful protest in Jakarta against the Santa Cruz massacre, was one of four recipients of the 1992 Reebok Human Rights Award. Araujo, 26, is a student in Bali and chairman of RENETIL (Timorese nationalist student group). Indonesian authorities refused him permission to visit the US to collect the award.

Reebok, the athletic shoe manufacturer, has presented the award annually since 1988. Its laudable public concern for human rights contrasts with the treatment of workers in Reebok's factories in Indonesia.

Support Timorese School in Darwin

Michio Takahashi of Japan recently visited North America to encourage support for the Darwin East Timorese School, which will provide an education for East Timorese refugee children living in Darwin, Australia. The Japanese have raised 60% of the money necessary for the school, and are hoping the Northern Territory government will donate land so the school can be built in 1993. Mr. Takahashi's hopes that "the East Timorese refugees can return to their own country as early as possible. We ask for your hearty cooperation in supporting the school, where the Timorese children will learn the Tetum language and the history and geography of East Timor."

A US support committee for the Darwin School is being formed. For more information, contact ETAN/US or Mr. Michio Takahashi, Miyagiken Kyoiku Komin Kosaikai, 1-2-6 Nishiki-cho, Aoba-ku, Sendai-shi, Miyagi-ken, 980 Japan. Fax +81/22-223-1323.

Escalating Repression in East Timor

As international pressure increases against the Indonesian occupation, a new governor has taken office in East Timor. Abilio Osorio Soares, 45, is a close ally of the Indonesian military and Colonel Prabowo, Suharto's son-in-law. Osorio Soares was a founder of Apodeti along with his brother, who was killed in the 1975 civil war with Fretilin.

The new governor's hatred of the Timorese independence movement persists, and he has proposed a mandatory resettlement plan within East Timor. In an interview in the October 29 issue of the new Indonesian biweekly *Forum Keadilan* (translated by TAPOL), the following exchange took place:

FK: What has been the impact of the Nov 12 incident on the people of East Timor?

OS: Dili has a population of 120,000. How many were involved in the demonstration?

FK: About a thousand.

OS: A thousand. And how many died?

FK: A hundred.

OS: A hundred or more. Let us say, two hundred. What percentage is that?

FK: But these deaths must have had a negative psychological impact on the community.

OS: That may be what you people outside think. As far as I'm concerned, I think far more should have died. Why did only that number die? Why not all the one thousand? We should be realistic when we consider the situation in East Timor. Aren't we being democratic enough? The entire people are in favour of integration, but there are still those who are causing trouble.

FK: Each victim has a family and friends. Won't that lead to feelings of revenge?

OS: If a child of yours dies, how will you feel? It's like that. If a child of mine dies, I will certainly feel a loss. If I happen to know who caused my child's death, I will have negative feelings towards that person. But if we consider the matter more deeply, looking at why those people died, then maybe they'll understand. The fact is that the lives of many people were disrupted by their trouble-making. Moreover, we need to be principled. What happened was an incident. It wasn't something we wanted to happen. The time will come when people will be convinced that it was an incident and that it was quite understandable.